

JOHN TOPP, PIRATE

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CHAPTER I.

"Ho, ho, John Topp!" said the boys. "You don't tackle him, that's what it is. The stranger can thrash you, and you know it."

Now, I knew nothing of the sort, and, in fact, rather fancied that I could thrash Alexander Ireland as easily as I had every other boy in Whitty, but the others were jealous of my prowess, and therefore egged me on to tackle the stranger in the hope that he might prove too smart for me. For thus their broken noses and lost teeth would be avenged.

I was at that time a bull-necked, squarely built young lout of 15, and Alec was red-haired, slender and wiry, and about six months my senior. I was the best fighter in Whitty—even Dan Asquith, the squint-eyed butcher's boy, said so—and I had a reputation to lose; Alec was a newcomer to the town and had none.

"Come on, carrotty head!" I cried, stung at last into action by the jeers which I affected to despise. "They tell me you are a good fighter; let us see which of us two is to be cock."

But the stranger kept his hands in his pockets.

"Why should I fight?" he asked gravely. "I haven't quarreled with you."

"Afraid?" said I contemptuously. "Right! Say I can beat you, and you shan't have your thrashing."

"No," he replied steadily. "I am not afraid of you, but I don't choose to fight for nothing."

"That's all brag," I said, as I edged up to him. "You've either got to fight or acknowledge you're afraid," and I gave him a shove with my shoulder.

"All right then; I'll fight."

And without more words we stripped and set to.

For an hour and a half by the church clock the fight went on, each of us doggedly determined to come up to the mark so long as his trembling knees would support him.

At last the end came, and it was Ireland who eventually struck the knock-out blow. How many rounds we fought I do not know, but at last I felt that unless I could finish him off quickly I should not be able to toe the mark the next time the umpire called time.

So, summoning up all of my failing energies for one last slashing blow that would make me the victor and him insensible, I rushed at him like a mad cart horse. He did not flinch, but stood his ground waiting for me.

Dodging my blow, he seized my left hand with his right, ducked his head under my arm, whipped his other hand between my legs and before any one could tell exactly what had happened I had flown over his head and was lying on the ground with all the wind knocked out of me like corn out of a burst bag. It was all done in less than a couple of seconds, and, as I had fallen on my head, I lay quiet enough.

"Alec Ireland," I said when I had recovered. "I own you have given me a thorough drubbing. Will you shake hands?"

"No, no," he said. "You had the best of it but for the last fall, and if it hadn't been for that south country trick by which I lifted you over my shoulder I should have had to knuckle under to you."

Such was the beginning of my friendship with Alexander Ireland. On that very night we took together the solemn sailors' oath, by which we became sworn shipmates for life, and to this day we have neither of us broken it.

My new friend and I quickly found that we had a great deal in common. The perils and pleasures of the sea had always had an enthralling fascination for me, and when I discovered that Alec shared my passion for salt water my previously vague longings became suddenly crystallized into a definite purpose—I would be a sailor. Consequently it soon became the greatest enjoyment of my leisure time to sit in the dark little parlor of the Angel and listen to the tales of the old seamen who frequented it—tales of the great captains they had known and sailed under, who, caring as little for the violence of the tropical hurricane as for the ice grip of the cold north, had braved the storms of unknown oceans in their stout little ships and had brought back from every clime its choicest treasures to lay them at the feet of our sovereign lady, good Queen Bess.

There was, however, one thing, and that no small one, over which Alec and I very nearly quarreled. And what should that be if not a woman? For it is woman's bright smile and coyly drooping eye which shatter half the friendships of man with man, even when the longest for down has hardly yet appeared on the upper lip and the razor is still a joy to be gloated over in secret.

Inez was her name, and she was the daughter of Don Miguel, a Spanish gentleman who had for a reason which I did not then know taken up his residence in Whitty. I had known her since she was a child of 10 and had never thought of her more than of any other girl in Whitty until one day I chanced to see her in the street with a new gown on. It was a wonderful gown—the skirt of it was slashed and puffed out to the size of a 40 gallon

cask—and as I looked and marveled it suddenly struck me that the laughing face above it was the most bewitching I had ever seen. Perhaps it was the fine dress that did it, and perhaps it was the pretty mouth that smiled and wished me a "good day." I am not quite sure which it was, but the next time I met her in the lane near her father's house I asked her to be my sweetheart. After a few blushes and a few kisses she said she would, and I was the proudest lad in Whitty.

Alec, however, was not pleased at my success, and very soon he told me so.

"Jack," he said, "I didn't think my sworn shipmate would prove a traitor." "A traitor!" I exclaimed. "It's a hard word, and I don't know what I have done to deserve it. How am I a traitor?"

"She is a Spaniard, Jack. The Spaniards are the queen's enemies, and you and I have said we meant to fight for the queen."

"Inez is no one's enemy." "But her father, Don Miguel, is a Spaniard."

"Yes; I suppose he is. Is that all you have to accuse him of?" I asked, somewhat nettled at his persistence.

"Isn't it enough? I tell you that every Spaniard is an enemy to England and Queen Bess, and since my father, Captain Harry Ireland, was murdered by the Spaniards every Spaniard is an enemy to me."

"And shall he be to me, too?" I said as I gripped his hand. "But I don't see that the rule applies to the daughters."

"Spanish daughters become Spanish mothers, Jack."

"Not when they marry Englishmen." "Do you mean to marry Inez, then?" he said, looking at me earnestly.

"Yes; when I am old enough, if she will have me."

"No fear of her refusing a stout Englishman! Well, if that is so I will say no more, although I admit I don't like it."

But, although Alec agreed to let me have my way, I could see that he was displeased at what I was doing, and his displeasure at first angered and then grieved me.

"Alec," I said to him one day. "I'm going to see Inez tonight. Will you come with me?"

"Do you really want me to go?"

"Yes, Alec, I do."

"Will her father be there?"

"No. We never see him in the evening."

"Then, if you are sure of that, I will go. But have you never guessed, Jack, why it is that you never see Don Miguel in the evening?"

"Because he is busy in his workshop."

"At what sort of work?"

"How should I know? I never asked him."

"I will tell you. He is an alchemist."

"What?" I cried. "Are you sure of that, Alec? Alchemy! Why, it's the devil's own trade."

"So they say. But to me it seems that if the devil had any favor for the work, alchemists would be richer than they are. It's an ill trade, though, at best and not the one I should choose for my comrade's father-in-law."

This news of Alec's troubled me, for, though he declared that the devil could have no share in such profitless toil,



I was the proudest lad in Whitty, yet I had always been told that every alchemist had sold himself to Satan, and I more than half believed it. Still, I argued that Inez was not to be blamed for her father's sins, and in the end Alec agreed with me.

After that night I never had any more disagreement with him on the subject of my love-making. Inez fairly laughed and sang herself into his good graces. She had the sweetest voice I ever heard, and as she sat in a corner by the fire and sang us quaint little sea songs that her nurse, Ann Garrat, had taught her I wondered whether the mermaids that the old sailors of the Angel spoke of were one-half so sweet and pretty as my own little Spanish sweetheart.

"Why, Jack," said Alec as we walked home from her house, "she is hardly a Spaniard at all, except for her black hair and eyes. No Whitty girl could have sung those English sea songs with a prettier accent than she did."

"No Whitty girl could have sung them half so well," I answered warmly, "and, as for her being English, her nurse has seen to that. Dame Garrat hates Spain almost as much as you do,

and she won't allow Inez to speak a word of Spanish in her hearing."

"Well, she's a sweet girl, Jack, and I'm glad of it for your sake. It's a pity, though, that her father is a Spaniard."

I said nothing in reply to this, for, to tell the truth, I was not much more in love with the surly Don Miguel than was Alec. By and by, as we walked, Alec began to hum a tune, and after a short time he sang the words too. It was the last song Inez had sung to us, and I remember the chorus went like this:

Then, ah, for the cruel creeping waves,
With their cold lips of spray;
But, ah, for the merry dancing waves
That with the swiftest play!

"Take care, Alec!" I said, with a laugh. "You'll be falling in love with Inez yourself!"

"No, no, Jack; I like her, it is true, but I'll never be a rival to my sworn shipmate."

Nevertheless when I said "Good night" to him and turned in at my father's gate I heard him go singing down the road, and the words that came floating up the breeze to me sounded suspiciously familiar. It seemed to me that what he sang was:

Hi, for the merry dancing waves!
And the tune, at any rate, was the same.

(To be Continued Next Week.)

PUNISHMENT VERY MILD.

Tuan is Only Banished and Lan Merely Dismissed.

ORDERED TO JOIN COURT.

Indication That Chinese Royalty is to Move to the Province of Sze Chuen. Anti-Christian Riots Have Again Broken Out in Province of Kiang Si.

London, Nov. 20.—Dr. Morrison, writing to the Times from Peking, says: "In communicating the punishment edict, dated Sian Fu, Nov. 13, to the foreign envoys, Li Hung Chang submits it as the final punishment the court is able to inflict and repeats the stereotyped plea of all Chinese plenipotentiaries, namely, that the emperor threatens himself and Prince Ching with severe punishment if they fail to induce the representatives of the powers to accept the compromise. The mildness of the sentences excites ridicule and strengthens the ministers in their determination to demand the death penalty. The punishments are illusory. Prince Tuan is merely banished to his own home, and others undergo a merely nominal lowering of rank. Perpetual imprisonment means a life of honored retirement. Large numbers of southern Chinese now residing in Peking, fearing further retribution during the winter, are preparing to leave for the south."

According to the Shanghai correspondent of the Times, it is asserted on good authority in Tien Tsin that there are still some missionaries surviving at Tai Yuen Fu under the protection of the mandarins.

ANTI-CHRISTIAN RIOTS.

Viceroy Attempts to Settle Trouble. Backed Up by a French Gunboat.

Canton, Nov. 20.—Refugees who have arrived here report that anti-Christian riots have broken out in the province of Kiang Si. The non-Christians are wearing badges and all persons not so decorated are in danger of death. The viceroy of the province has appointed a deputy to settle the disturbances and French gunboats will accompany the latter with a view of enforcing his orders.

London, Nov. 20.—The French consul here reports, says the Shanghai correspondent of the Daily News, that severe persecutions of Catholic converts continue in the province of Kiang Si. Mr. Goodnow, United States consul, hears that the Protestants in the province of Che Kiang are similarly persecuted. The governors of both provinces are Manchus and violently anti-foreign.

Tuan Merely Banished.

London, Nov. 20.—The Morning Post's Peking correspondent says: "The edict inflicting punishment is milder than the first reports suggested. Prince Tuan and Prince Chwang are only banished and not imprisoned. Duke Lan is merely dismissed. The foreign envoys cannot accept the edict, owing to the inadequacy of the punishments. Count von Waldersee officially announces that he had stopped looting and restored peace in the province of Chi Li."

Ordered to Join the Court.

Shanghai, Nov. 20.—The governor general of the province of Sze Chuen has been ordered to join the court. This causes excitement in provincial officialdom, as it is regarded as a further indication that the Imperial family is going to Sze Chuen.

Chinese Destroy Railroad.

St. Petersburg, Nov. 20.—Dispatches from Vladivostok say the Chinese have destroyed 500 versts of the southern section of the Manchurian railway. All the stations were burned and much rolling stock was destroyed. The damage is estimated at 10,000,000 roubles.

Five Men Washed Overboard.

Newberry, Mich., Nov. 20.—Word has been received here by D. N. McLeod, lumberman, that one of his scows was caught in a storm on Lake Superior off Deer park, and five of the six men on board were washed overboard and drowned. The dead: Joseph H. Cascarden, Joseph Billings, Herman Wenzel and Baron Nizel.

AFFECTION BETTER THAN LOVE.

Love's exultations, timid, bold,
And can bloom both hot and cold.
When it feels, or when it fails,
Love's delicious while it lasts.
When we trust it, then it fails,
Like a vapor it exhales,
And love's garden may disclose
That the thistle roots the rose.

True affection then we deem,
Deeply rooted in esteem,
More than love is sure to bloom
Enduring married happiness.
It is something that endures,
That a life's content secures,
Free from all that peace destroys
In love's exultant joys.

—George H. Brown in New York Home Journal.

A Transvaal Love Story.

In the kitchen of a Boer farm at Harpersmith two brothers, Paul and Hendrick Hoopstad, sat in earnest conversation.

"Will you come, Hendrick?"

"I cannot leave, Paul. There is English in our veins, and besides to join the commando against the British would be taking up arms against the woman I love."

"The woman we love, Hendrick, for God knows I think of her every minute of my life. You and I have been all in all to each other ever since we were born, but this mutual love for Nancy Martin seems likely to divide us. Even supposing we put our chances to the test, if I win her you will hate me, and if you were successful my thoughts would turn to you in anger. Let us, then, take our rifles, join the commando and for the time forget her, and perhaps when the war is over one of us may gain by death what the other could not give in life."

"I will not fight against the English, Paul."

"Think well, Hendrick. Nancy Martin has been in England for the last four years—is it not possible that she may have an English lover?"

"We are being enticed and threatened into a foolhardy war by those who have their own ends to serve. I will take my rifle and fight, but it will be with the English."

"Then, Hendrick, we must part, though we part in all affection. God bless you, my brother, and the woman we love."

"Farewell, Paul, and God grant that we may not meet on the battlefield."

Paul turned his horse toward Newcastle, while Hendrick rode in the opposite direction, with the intention of making his way to John Martin's farm, which lay on the banks of the Calabon river, between Basutoland and Natal.

Hendrick Hoopstad's love for Nancy, the only daughter of John Martin of the Calabon farm, was the one thought that engrossed his mind. He loved her and was willing to lay down his life for her without thought of reward. It might be, as Paul had suggested, that Nancy had an English lover. Well, time would show, and whatever happened he would always strive to be worthy of her and be willing to serve her in any way in his power.

In about three hours he had sighted John Martin's farm. Down the hill Hendrick let the reins drop on his horse's neck and proceeded at a walking pace. It was a calm, still evening, and the horse's hoofs made no sound in the soft sand.

Reaching the orchard, the sound of voices fell upon his ear, and almost mechanically he stopped the horse and listened. It was the voice of Nancy he heard, and, standing in his stirrups, he looked over the brush growth. Yes, Paul was right—she was standing beneath the shade of a spreading tree and a tall man dressed in the British khaki uniform held her in his arms, her head upon his shoulder and her lips upturned to his.

"The time was so long, Dick, I thought you would never come."

"Did you, darling? Well, I have come at last, though I could wish a more peaceful time for visiting my beautiful sweetheart. But when this war is over I will make you my wife."

"My love for you, Dick, can never change. Since I left you it has lived on the memory of those sweet hours of delicious happiness when we used to sit together in the sunshine and plan the joyful future—when we two shall be always together."

The man on the horse heard the words that pierced his heart like the stab of a dagger. For some moments he sat like a statue, his face grim and set and his eyes staring into blankness. The steed moved forward of its own accord and wandered on upward of an hour, while its rider sat wrestling with himself. Then, with a sigh and a sob that almost choked him, he gathered up the reins and once more turned toward John Martin's farm.

Here John Martin met him with an old fashioned English welcome, and Hendrick was ushered into the sitting room, where sat Nancy and her lover. Nancy greeted him heartily, if somewhat shyly.

"I am glad to see you, Hendrick—let me introduce you to Mr. Harvey. Dick, this is our friend, Hendrick Hoopstad."

"I am very glad to know you; we can't have too many friends these troublous times. You look like a fighting man. I hope you are with us?"

"I cannot fight against Miss Martin's countrymen, and the blood in my veins is more English than Dutch. I am on my way now to volunteer."

"Then we are well met; I am enrolling a body of volunteers to act as scouts. I saddle in a few hours, so if you are willing we go together."

"I ask nothing better. But what of Miss Martin—surely she must not stay here?"

"I am glad you add your entreaties to mine. I am trying to persuade Mr.

Martin and Nancy to retire to the coast until danger is past."

"That's all right, Dick," answered Mr. Martin. "I should like to persuade Nancy to go, but I'm going to stick to the farm."

"You run great risk, Mr. Martin," said Hendrick. "If you stay here, you will be commanded to join the Boer army."

"I am an Englishman, and my farm is in Natal; that, I take it, is out of their jurisdiction."

"Possibly, but I hardly think they will draw so fine a line."

Well, anyway I stay here, and it won't be healthy for the commando that interferes with me."

"Then, if you are so determined, I must ask you to be equally determined in insisting upon Miss Nancy going to Durban. My married sister lives there, and she would be quite safe."

After much discussion it was decided that Nancy should depart for Durban immediately, with Hendrick for an escort. Dick Harvey would accompany them as far as Mool river, where he would have to leave them, and Hendrick was to rejoin Dick as soon as Nancy was safe at the coast. Hendrick knew now that Nancy could never be to him more than a friend, and in that friendship he determined that no sacrifice should be too great for him.

The three rode together until Dick had to leave them; then with a tender and almost heartrending farewell he passed her into the care of Hendrick and departed. They reached Durban without mishap, and Hendrick, having consigned Nancy to the care of his sister, prepared to return.

"I thank you, Hendrick, for your care of me."

"I wish for no thanks. To be of service to you is the aim and end of my life."

She looked at him curiously and seemed to penetrate his secret.

"I am going to the war," he continued slowly, fixing his gaze upon the ground. "to fight for your countrymen and you. It may be that I shall not survive, and I should like you to think kindly of me. You are the only English woman I have been privileged to know with any degree of friendship, and the days have passed happily with me. A hope full of vanity was born within me that perhaps the caprice of fate might turn your heart toward me in love. Forgive me for saying this. I am only a foolish man, but I thought I would like you to know."

"Poor Hendrick!"

"I have seen the man you love, and my vanity is dead. Goodbye! I should like—may I—I should like to kiss your hand to seal my vow that henceforth my life is consecrated to serving you and yours to the death."

The tears rolled down her cheeks as she gave him her hand. The strong man kissed it passionately and departed.

Hendrick made his way back to Dick Harvey and was formally enrolled as a volunteer. News came soon after that the Boers had crossed the border and were invading Natal, and Captain Harvey began to have fears for the safety of John Martin. He consulted Hendrick on the subject.

"What do you think of it, Hoopstad?"

"Bad, very bad. John Martin will have to join a commando or be shot."

"So I fear, and I want you to start tonight and make your way to the Calabon farm. If you find John Martin there, persuade him to come back with you. But, if our worst fears are realized and he has disappeared, find out what has become of him."

"I will start in an hour, and I thank you for giving me the opportunity."

"Good luck go with you."

In an hour Hendrick took the road for John Martin's farm. Numerous parties of Boers were about, and extreme caution was necessary. This meant slow progress, and it was not until the second evening that he reached the homestead. Dismounting, he rapped on the door, but elicited no response, and it was soon evident that John Martin was absent. Upon looking around Hendrick discovered the frightened face of a Kaffir boy peeping at him over a fence.

"Hello, Cabbage! Where is your master?"

"Baas, 'im dung one 'way."

"Where to?"

"Baas Shiel 'im dun took 'im 'way."

"Shiel?"

"Sarten. 'Im ride up, big many, took Baas Mart'n, tied um hands an dun gorn 'way."

"Which way did they ride?"

"Cabbage um follow Baas—Glencoe—then um come back here an wait fo' Baas."

And then Hendrick realized that the worst had come to pass, and John Martin was a prisoner in the hands of Commander Shiel.

"I will not return with such meager news," he said to himself. "I will push on toward Glencoe and learn more, even if I have to penetrate into their camp."

He accordingly made his way toward Glencoe and found his progress more difficult every mile. Time after time he was stopped by bands of Boers, but always got away by saying that he was riding to join Shiel's commando. As he had taken the precaution to wear his own clothes, this explanation was accepted as satisfactory.

Nearing the heights of Glencoe, Hendrick thought it prudent to remain in hiding until evening. Tethering his horse in a small wood, he concealed himself in some bushes and endeavored to get some sleep. He was awakened some hours later by the sound of voices, and, peering from his place of concealment, he discerned a party of Boers on horseback about 12 yards away.

"Do you think they will attack tonight?"

"Either tonight or tomorrow morning. Villjoen brought word."

"Well, he is a reliable scoundrel."

"A good spy. Well, if the cursed roonkies storm Glencoe, they will find our guns manned by their own countrymen."

"Aye, manned by roonkies with their hands tied behind their backs. Ha, ha! a good plan of Shiel's to truss those who refuse to fight and make them targets for their friends. I'm sorry for John Martin, though. He was a good friend."

They moved away, and Hendrick realized from their conversation that Shiel had tied those who had refused to join his commando behind the Boer guns, so that there was every possibility of their being killed should the English make an assault.

Carefully picking his way, he led his horse to within two miles of the Boer position. After making the animal secure he proceeded on foot. He advanced at first without any attempt at concealment, answering when challenged that he was on his way to Shiel with news of the enemy.

The audacity of this proceeding was justified by its success, and Hendrick found himself well inside the Boer position almost without question. On the ridge where the guns were posted some 20 men were lying. Hendrick walked among them unsuspected. They could not tell whether he had just joined the commando or had been with them for weeks. New arrivals were pouring in daily.

Passing along the ridge, Hendrick came to the guns, and there, with his hands tied behind him and secured to the gun carriage, lay John Martin.

"Mr. Martin!"

The captive looked at him wearily.

"I am Hendrick—st—make no noise—do not speak. Miss Nancy is safe at Durban. The English storm this position tomorrow. I will cut your bonds, but it is all I can do for you. If you can escape, you will find my horse in the brush, two miles along the road to the right. Should you see Nancy again, say I did my best to keep my promise."

He hastily severed the captive's bonds, and, bidding Martin hold his hands as if still tied, he left him the knife and passed along the ridge. He proceeded down the mountain and was just congratulating himself on his lucky escape when he was confronted by a band of armed men.

They challenged him, and he gave his usual reply that he was on his way to Commander Shiel. The band opened out, and Hendrick was faced by a tall man on horseback.

"I am Commander Shiel. Who are you, and what do you want?"

For a moment Hendrick was silent, and before he could speak a light was flashed on his face.

"I know him—it is Hendrick Hoopstad," cried a voice.

"Hoopstad, the man who refused to obey the call of the government and enlisted as a volunteer with the English! You see, we are well informed, my brave spy. Bring him along, men; we will show the reward we reserve for traitors."

Hendrick was seized by rough and willing hands and hurried to the Boer camp. Without any delay he was sentenced to be shot at break of day, and as he was being taken from Shiel's presence he heard a messenger announce the news that John